

Interview
with
JOHN SHUDA
and
BEATRICE SHUDA

November 28, 1994

Interviewer: Kenneth Steeber

Transcribed by: Joy K. Stiles

Shenandoah National Park
Luray, Virginia

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Side A:

John Shuda is a former Civilian Conservation Corps enrollee stationed in Shenandoah National Park from 1937 to 1942. The interview begins with Shuda giving a brief account of his family background and schooling. Shuda then relates how he left school at age 16 and joined the CCC. He was stationed at Camp 12 at Piney River, at first working on a crew grading and seeding embankments. Shuda then describes how he was "drafted" into becoming a cook for his camp.

Shuda describes a typical day in the CCC and talks about food, discipline, laundry, camp maintenance and camp cleanliness. He talks about religious services available to enrollees, educational opportunities, and recreational activities. He talks about two specific officers, Lieutenant Sheehan and Lieutenant Morris. Shuda did not have direct contact with any of the original mountain residents while they were still living within the Park, but talks about what he knew of them. Animal life in the Park and vegetation is touched on, and Shuda compares the appearance of the Park today with his CCC days. Shuda goes into more detail about recreational activities; he was the catcher for the Camp 12 baseball team. He talks about dating local girls in both Luray and Front Royal and the rivalry between the CCC boys and the men from the Front Royal Remount station over girls in Front Royal. Shuda's wife, Beatrice, is introduced as the local girl from Luray he later married.

Beatrice talks about dating CCC boys and John describes typical dates. John then describes leaving the CCC and entering the Army a short time later.

Side B:

Shuda talks about his Army career and describes the contents of a display of medals and mementoes from his military service. During a military furlough, he returned to Virginia to marry Beatrice and he settled in Luray when he left the military. Shuda relates the jobs he held after his Army service until he began work for Shenandoah National Park in 1973 in the Maintenance Division. Shuda retired from the National Park Service in July, 1985. He then closes with his impressions of the benefits he received from his CCC days and his wish that some form of CCC would be available to young people today.

End of interview.

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START SIDE A

Ken Steeber: The following interview was conducted on behalf of the Oral History Program of Shenandoah National Park. The interviewee is John Shuda, the interviewer is Ken Steeber. With me is Beatrice Shuda, John's wife and Debby Judd, member of the Shenandoah National Park Oral History Committee. The interview took place at - what's your address here, John?

John Shuda: Route 1, Box 231, Rileyville, Virginia.

KS: On Monday, the 28th of November, 1994 at 1:30 pm. John Shuda served in the CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps] in the early '30's. John has graciously consented to share his CCC experiences with us. Much of the human history of the CCC exists in the memories of those who served. John, thank you for having us and John, what is your full name?

JS: John, no middle initial, Shuda.

KS: And your address here now again is please. . .

JS: Is Route 1, Box 231, Rileyville, Virginia, zip 22650.

KS: What is your birthday?

JS: September 22, 1921.

KS: And where were you living when you signed up for the CCC?

JS: In South Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

KS: Who were you living with at that time?

JS: Living with my parents, mother and father, and eleven children.

KS: Whoa! How many brothers did you have?

JS: Had five--six, six brothers and five sisters.

KS: How did you find out about the CCC?

JS: Why, one brother went to CCC's in Rocky Mount, North Carolina when it first started in the '30's. While he was in there and he was getting ready to come out, I left school,

couldn't find no unemployment. Unemployment in those days was very hard to find. Daddy was only working three days a week. It was hard for anybody to get a job in those days. So I found out about CC's and I got my mother and she got the politician in South Philadelphia and got me into camp.

KS: How old were you when you joined?

JS: Sixteen years old.

KS: Now that was under the age requirement, wasn't it?

JS: Right.

KS: Now why did you join?

JS: I joined because I wanted to find work and get out of the city at the same time.

KS: How long did you serve in the CCC's?

JS: Five years. 1937 to 1942.

KS: Now how many enlistments was that?

JS: Well, you only enlisted one year at a time. If you, you're a leader, or you get some kind of a trade or something like that, they like your work, they hold you over. I was held over for five times.

KS: What was the last year of school that you attended?

JS: Last school was eleventh grade, 1937, well the early part of '37. I left school and came right to CC's.

KS: Now what camp were you assigned to?

JS: I was at Camp 12, 1393, at Piney River.

KS: When you first came in the CCC's, what jobs were you assigned to?

JS: My first job when I came to CCC's was working on the banks. With a mattock, we trimmed off the banks after they blasted them open. We trimmed the rocks out and sloped the banks down so erosion wouldn't set in, and then plant grass, put boards, two by fours along it, tie it down

with string with straw so it wouldn't erode and wash down. I done that for about six months. Then after that, I was out in reveille getting ready for my job, the next job, and the mess sergeant needed a cook. He was short a cook, one of the cooks went home. Like I say, you was only allowed a year, so that cook went home. So this mess sergeant came down the line, and he looked at everybody and he finally looked at me twice and he says, "I think you can make a cook there, can't you, Shuda?" I said, "I don't think so, Mr. Vo--Mr. Vlkojan was his name, John Vlkojan. He lives in Luray and is still living. He was mess sergeant. I said, "No, Mr. Vlkojan," I says, "I don't believe I'd make a good cook." Finally he says, "You're my cook." So he told the first sergeant, and the first sergeant pulled me out and they sent me to school, cooking school, in New Cumberland, Pennsylvania. I learned to cook, and then I came back after my, after I passed cooking school I came back and cooked in the CCC's.

KS: In as much detail as you can, tell us about the daily camp routine. For example, what was wake-up time, what were your barrack duties, your eating times, and non-work responsibilities?

JS: Well, wake-up time was about 5:30. You had to make your bed up and everything, get ready for breakfast. Then you had breakfast and after breakfast you fell out for revellie. Then after revellie you went back and got ready for inspection. Every morning your barracks was inspected. Your bed had to be made and it had to be made good and stiff so when that lieutenant drops a quarter on that bed, she's got to hop up. If it don't hop up, then you re-make it. Just like the Army, but it isn't the Army. But the Army men are the one that run it. They were, they were officers from the Reserves, Army Reserve. They took care of us in the camp, far as the camp. Then the Forestry men took care of us on the work detail. And after that, you fell out for your job. You got one sandwich, one fruit, and a cup of coffee for your lunch.

KS: And dinner time was after your work assignment?

JS: And dinner, after your dinner time you worked some then you come in and you had supper after you worked all day out. You ate your lunch out in the field.

KS: Were there any disciplinary problems in camp?

JS: Very little. If you got too bad, and your disciplinary was too bad, they sent you home. They didn't have to contend with that, because this was a volunteer thing. You wasn't drafted, you wasn't forced into it, it was a volunteer corps, so they didn't put up with much foolishness. If you was lazy, and you wouldn't listen, you got your ticket home.

KS: Okay, I think you almost answered this question for me, but for the record, who prepared the food?

JS: Preparation of food was made by your cooks, but the menus was made--a master menu was made by the Labor Department. Labor Department was the one that took care of the Civilian Conservation Corps.

KS: How would you rate the food?

JS: Food was very good, it was very good, very excellent food.

KS: And what were some of the typical meals you would serve?

JS: Well, lot of times we'd have scrambled eggs, sometimes fried eggs for breakfast, scrambled, sometimes french toast, sometimes scrapple and eggs. Then you'd have oatmeal, hot oatmeal, cold cereal, coffee, milk, everybody got a half-pint of milk.

KS: Okay. How was laundry handled?

JS: Laundry was done on your own. You went up to the wash house and washed your own laundry.

KS: Now, who was responsible for the physical maintenance of the camp, like the doors, windows, stairs, walls . . .

JS: You had, we had maintenance men for that.

KS: Were they CCC men?

JS: They all, all, everything, everybody in the, that does this work is CC. Now, the maintenance men took care of all the repairs of the woodwork, doors and all. Then you had men

with--night watchmen would take care of the fires at night. See, you had coal stoves, had a coal stove in each barrack, plus they'd take care of the kitchen stove. We burnt coal all the way around.

KS: How about the cleanliness of the camp? Who was responsible for that?

JS: Each leader was--a leader was in charge of his barracks. He was in charge of his barracks to keep clean, so it was up to him to keep the men to keep it clean. The first sergeant was in charge of the whole camp far as keeping the outside clean and keeping the morale up, and keeping the maintenance of the buildings up. That was his job.

KS: Was there any rivalries between camps?

JS: No rivalries at all. Played ball against each other, went to church at different ones. Each church had a different Sunday for Mass or service. No rivalry at all.

KS: While we're on the church services, who conducted the church services?

JS: Well, we had a Catholic priest who'd come to one camp, certain time on Sunday. And then they had a Protestant minister and when the Protestant preached, they'd come, they'd send them downtown. There was no Catholic church in Luray at that time.

KS: Were they civilians then, the priests and the ministers?

JS: The priests were all Army men, reserve.

KS: Okay. And that goes for the Protestant men, too?

JS: No, Protestant men were civilians.

KS: What were some of the hardships of camp life?

JS: Hardships of camp life? [laughs] I can't really figure any hardship whatsoever. The best five years of my life was spent on that mountain.

KS: Did you attend any of the educational classes while you were in the CCC's?

JS: I attended some, I couldn't attend as much as I would like to. We had a good educational program. Mr. Yowell was our main man, he was in charge of it. And he had Mr. Heinz. And they had woodwork. They had all kind of movies and all, and film on all kind of work, all kind

of skills. They had a library, eight, nine hundred, maybe more books. And very good educational building.

KS: What classes did you attend?

JS: I attended the classes on, well, I attended one there on--I always got the cookbooks out, tried to keep up as much with that. Then I done some work on English and all, I was a little lax on English at the time at school. So I took a little English with Mr. Yowell.

KS: Now what part of camp life did you enjoy the most?

JS: The most I liked about the camp life was being up there on the mountain, and when you got done your work, you was on your own. We had a PX, we went down and you shot pool, had a nickelodeon. Just the way you'd go out, you'd walk around, you'd go on the overlook. We used to walk up Hogback and talk to the tourists. It was just the best five years of my life!

KS: While you mention the tourists, were there many tourists while you were in CCC camp?

JS: Lot of tourists, more tourists than there has been since even when I worked there. At that time, it was just built, the Park was just built. And tourists were coming from all over the country. You could see license plates from New Mexico, everywhere, any part of the country. Some from Canada, foreign places. Then there's always people from Maryland; your hikers and all, come from Maryland, Pennsylvania. But it was a lot of tourists.

KS: Some of your personal experiences: do you remember what your first impression of the Park was?

JS: Well, when I got off the train in Luray, Virginia, we got off at the passenger station, all the trucks were there from each camp. There was five camps on the Skyline Drive. Camp 12, Camp 10, Camp 1, Camp 2, Camp 3. And each one had a truck down there to take your men to these camps. Well, we got on our truck, which was a stake body truck, seated about twenty-five men, something like that. We started up the mountain. As we started up the mountain, now this is

1937, late October, leaves were all--leaves were off the trees, and it was dismal. It was a foggy day, rainy day, and we started up the mountain. As we approached the mountain and started up, I told the boy sitting next to me--I happened to be sitting on the end, and the boy was sitting on the right side of me. And I told him, I said, "We're never going to get off this mountain." And I never did!

KS: Can you name one or two personalities from that time who really stand out in your mind? And why?

JS: Well, the lieutenant I liked very much, he was very good, Lieutenant Sheehan. There was another lieutenant, First Lieutenant from Georgia, he was a southerner. See, before we come in there, they were all southerners. Then after the--in '37, the southerners left, then we come in from Pennsylvania. New Jersey. Lieutenant Morris from Georgia, he was very good. He used to tease me about making grits, all he wanted was grits, grits, grits. He liked to eat grits. But Lieutenant Sheehan, and the officers, all the officers were very good. And even the men we worked with, men worked with, even the non-com's, all the mess sergeants, and all the non-com's and all, I just enjoyed the whole thing.

KS: Did you have any contact with any of the mountain residents?

JS: Yes, I did. A couple local people were in camp with us. They lived right here, one lived here in Rileyville, but he's dead and gone now. But Mr. Meadows, he lived up there. He used to come home every weekend from camp, take the fire road down Mathews Arm. There used to be a fire road there, instead of a camp, instead of a campground used to be a fire road. He'd take that fire road, come down over to Compton, to his homeplace. Then there was a Mr. Crispman, Mr. Stoneberger, they were all local men.

KS: They were in the CCC's--

JS: They were CC's but they had a skill. See, they were carpenters, so they kept them over.

KS: How about some of the people who lived in the mountains, did you have any contact

with them?

JS: Never had any actual contact with them until after CC days and I moved to Luray and stayed here to live. Then I met a lot of them that were--they bought their property from them and they put them in what they called the Ida Homestead. That's where they home . . . they put their homes there; took them off the mountain, paid them for their mountain home, then they put them out here to Ida Homestead.

KS: What was your first impression, though, of mountain people; I'm sure you must have heard of them.

JS: Well, I think mountain people were very unique. They were good, they hard workers, they usually cut bark off the trees, and bring it in to Luray to tannery - that's how they made their living. Plus it took 'em almost all day to get to town sometimes, those back roads in the mountain in those days were just narrow roads. The mountain hadn't gotten built up good until they worked on it for Skyline Drive. Everything else was just little roads, not as many trees, foliage wasn't much, top of the mountain was just bare.

KS: Excellent. What do you remember about the animal life that was here?

JS: Animal life was very good. It was more snakes than they are now. People has taken a lot of snakes off the mountain. They go out at night and hunt them up and make belts out of their hides which was not right and I never did think it was right, but nothing you can do about it. But used to be a lot of rattlesnakes. Right there that little peak at Piney River used to be called--it's still called Rattlesnake Point Overlook. It's a little peak there. That used to be bare, just rocks. You go up there and you could find rattlesnakes sitting on those rocks in the hot sun, when it's real hot.

KS: Now were there any camp pets, did people keep pets?

JS: No, we didn't, we didn't keep no pets at all. We got plenty of pets from the valley and . . . the bear, the bear would get in our garbage cans. I'd go out and take garbage out to the garbage cans or trash and you go out there, see a bear rooting right in the cans many a time.

KS: How about deer? Were there many deer in the Park?

JS: Lotta deer, yes sir.

KS: Other animals? Squirrels . . .

JS: Squirrels. I'd even seen possum, even seen, uh, . . . got me now.

Beatrice Shuda: Bear.

JS: Huh?

KS: Probably raccoons?

JS: Raccoons.

KS: Would you say there were, there were a lot of animals or not very many?

JS: Lot of animals.

KS: Lot of animals?

JS: Yeah, there was a lot of.

KS: How would you describe the variety of plant life in the Park when you got here?

You mentioned that the trees on top of the mountains were bare.

JS: Yeah, wasn't many plants. Most plants we'd find would be down in the lower part of the mountain, the boundaries would be your mostly--where most of your blackberries and stuff like that. Far as on top of the mountain, you wouldn't see much, that was bare. But when you got down in the mountain where the people lived down in there, they had cemeteries down there. You can go through there and find the cemetery with people buried there. But they had a lot of, lot of flowers and wildflowers, stuff all through there.

KS: What was the top of the mountains used for, that it, you know, didn't have any vegetation?

JS: Well, it was just that it was always just bare, I don't know what they ever used it for, just traveled up, maybe cut trees out, and cut the barks down. Instead of cutting down about where they lived, they'd go up top and cut the top off.

KS: If you visited the park recently, how does it compare to your first visit?

JS: Mmm! Put me on the spot! [laughter] The Park right now, it don't look as pretty as it did in our day, CC days and the days I worked there. I think they've let it grow up too much now. The parks were made especially to be for people to go to visit, to see the scenery, picnic, to go on the overlooks and look over the vistas, and to go up there and have picnics, enjoy themselves. We kept it trimmed down, kept it nice. Kept the fireplaces cleaned out and everything so they can have fire to cook their hotdogs and hamburgers . . .

KS: This is at the picnic grounds?

JS: . . .which I and my family have done. Yeah, picnic grounds always had them. That's what the Park was really meant for, the working people. The working people can't go to Las Vegas or Bermuda and far away. They have to use--the local working man has to use the Park for his vacation. Go up there and camp a week, couple days. Go out hiking. Love nature, you love nature, you want to hike in the woods. There's a place. You take AT trail [Appalachian Trail], runs from all the way to Maine to Georgia . . . and you got it all, you can walk the whole distance if you want.

KS: Did you have a lot of hikers while you were in the Park?

JS: Very much. Met a lot of them on the road. Some of them were women. Had extra shoes, stockings on their packs. Even women alone, walking that trail from Maine to Georgia.

KS: What was the weather like when you were in the Park?

JS: Weather at that time was right bad. We had--used to have snow up there from the last of October to about the first of May. From the frost line up--the top, what I'm talking about, the top of the mountain. That used to stay on there all winter long. It wouldn't melt away 'til about the first of May, last of April.

KS: Did the boys have any work duties during this period of time?

JS: When it's real snowy and you can't get out, you don't. But if it's not too bad, you go out and cut dead trees and all. But not--you didn't have electric saws, you had two hand saws. You

had to go out and cut out and do work like that. But when it's real bad, all you do is stay in your barracks, clean up your barracks and do detail work around the camp. Then you have dinner in camp at that time.

KS: Did they give a lot of furloughs during the wintertime for people to go home?

JS: Not much furloughs, it had to be emergency furlough. You're only there for one year. But you had every weekend you can get off and go to town. You have Luray and we had Front Royal. We had two towns we go into. You go on Friday night, Saturday night, and Sunday night. You had to be back Monday morning for reveille.

KS: Okay. What I'd like to do now is talk a little bit about, since you just touched on it, a little bit about recreation. What recreation opportunities were available at the camp?

JS: Well, we had pool tables, and we had, play checkers, inside--lot of inside games. Then we played--we had a ball, baseball team, had a ballfield. We built our ballfield ourself. We didn't have no electric, no equipment. We couldn't handle shovels, bulldozer, stuff like that. The only thing we could drive was a truck, 'cause we were young, we wasn't old, old enough to handle all big equipment. Local people done that. So all the rocks we got out to make the ballfield we had to do with iron, with regular iron bars. So we made a ballfield, and we had a ballfield, played ball. Then there's . . . but like I say, a lot of time went out and just took a walk through the mountains.

KS: Now, did you play on any of the sport teams?

JS: Played baseball. I caught. Was catcher.

KS: What other teams did you play?

JS: We played other camps. We played Camp Roosevelt. Camp Roosevelt was the first CC camp ever built, over here on the Fort Valley Road. We played them, and every time we'd go over and play them, they'd feed us for supper. We'd go over and play in the Sunday evening, they'd give us supper. Then we'd played each one of the camps on the mountain. Just took turns playing each camp. Then we came down and played the Luray team, men team in Luray. That was a bunch

of, just () bunch of local men had a team behind the old funeral parlor there, they call the Ford Avenue. We used to play back in there. Then we come down and played the girl's softball. Used to come down and play--Hap Heiser used to be the athletic director down here. We played them softball. Any recreation we could get, we got. And we got plenty of it.

KS: Well, I guess a question now is how good were their teams, in your opinion?

JS: Very good, mediocre for just local teams. I mean, wasn't no professional. But we had good games, very good games, good umpiring, and . . . good, good, good performance. There wasn't no, no bickering, no fighting. Very good.

KS: Did you have many spectators at these games?

JS: Oh, yes, plenty of spectators.

KS: Lot of the boys?

JS: Boys, and then local people would come to the local games. Then up in the camps, the camp boys would all come.

KS: Now, what other games did the enrollees engage in? Like checkers, or chess, or like that?

JS: Checkers, they played checkers mostly. Checkers and they had ping pong. Then you had, like I said, shooting pool. And games like horseshoes, they had horseshoes outside.

KS: Now, did you date any of the local girls?

JS: Yes, I did. [laughter from Beatrice Shuda] I dated one in Luray and one in Front Royal. When I went to Front Royal, I would take her out. Then when I went to Luray, I would take this other one out. But in Front Royal we had too much competition. There was one girl for every six men. The reason why, there was a remount station in Front Royal which was a cadre of soldiers. They were horse soldiers, a cavalry. They would come to town and we would come to town and there was five men to every girl. You had to run to get one.

KS: What was a typical date like?

JS: Well, you went to the movies, or you went roller skating. Had roller skating in Front Royal. We'd go roller skating, then we'd go to, have a bottle of pop. Those days they had bottle pop. Didn't drink much beer. Once in a while drank beer, but not as much. Money wasn't that much. We didn't get but a dollar a day. Dollar a day, thirty dollars a month, you sent twenty five dollars home and you kept five.

KS: Well, how often were you allowed to go home?

JS: I never went home until . . . I never went home at all, 'til . . . 'til I really was discharged. Some of the men went home on emergency furlough, but they didn't give you many furloughs to go home on.

KS: Beatrice, we're very fortunate here to be with Beatrice Shuda. This is one of the girls I believe you dated. Which one is that, the Page County girl?

JS: Page County.

KS: Page County.

JS: Born in Page County.

KS: Well, this is John's wife. Beatrice, what did you think of the CCC boys?

Beatrice Shuda: Well, I didn't have too many regular dates with them to start with. But we had a dance hall in . . . I guess you'd have to call it a recreation place, but they loved records and dancing on the floor. We would all go there and not date! Not dating! Just, boys would come and girls would come. They would get together and dance and have a good time. Then I dated a few, but they were like--to me, like, well, I'll go with this one tonight and that one tomorrow and the next one that come along. But then after I met Shuda, I didn't do much dating with other people.

KS: I guess that answers my question. [laughter]

BS: He dated every other girl in the county before he met me.

KS: I will give you no comment on that. [laughter] Very good. What I'd like to ask you now is some questions on the post CCC. What did you do after leaving the CCC's?

JS: After I left the CCC's, I went home--

BS: Went in the army.

JS: I went home, and stayed a while, and got restless, and I finally got called in for the draft to be examined. The doctor made me 1-A, wanted to know where I'd been hiding. I said, "Well, I'd been in Virginia, the Skyline Drive, for five year." He said, "Well, you're in perfect health, you should have been in the Army a long time ago." And that was in '42, latter part of '42. So after he told me, made me 1-A, I come on home and told my mother, "Well, I'm going on down to see Beatty a while," and I went to come down here. I used to ride a bus from Philadelphia to Washington and right in. Used to have a bus come through here in those days. I come to see Beatty and then -- I don't know, I got home, went home, and then I decided to find a job, and I did. My mother got another politician, got me a job at the Gulf Refining Company. I worked for Gulf Refining Company -- I think it was about six months. I got tired of it and I decided I wasn't going to wait for the draft so I went and joined the Army.

[KS: Please turn the tape over]

[END SIDE A]

[START SIDE B]

KS: John, what sort of career have you had since you've been in the CCC?

JS: Since I've been in the CCC?

KS: Yeah, what have you done?

JS: I, like I said, I worked outside, out on the road, and I cooked and then I wound up as mess sergeant. Then after mess sergeant, I wound up as first sergeant.

KS: And after the CCC, you went into the military?

JS: Into the Army.

KS: What'd you do there?

JS: Well, when I first went there, when I first went there, I put in for truck driver. After the company commander seen my records, he got hold of my records some way, he seen that I cooked in the CCC's for so many years. He got the first sergeant and had me come see him. So I went and reported to him, as military, like you're supposed to. I asked him what was the problem. He said, "There's no problem," he says, "The problem is with you." He says, "Here you are putting in for truck driver, and here you been to a cook school for Civilian Conservation Corps in New Cumberland, Pennsylvania," where I went to school. I think the Army has a school there, too. And he said, "You been to a cook school, and cooked all those years in the CC's, and you come here and put on 'truck driver!'" He said, "You're not getting no truck!" He said, "You get on down to the mess sergeant down at the kitchen. I'm gonna call him up and you're going to be a cook. And I'm going to taste your first cooking and I want to see how it tastes." And that was it. I was a cook.

KS: Very good. John, your wife just handed me a framed display here. Of course it has a picture of you when you were in the Army. But I see you were a master sergeant?

JS: First sergeant.

KS: Right. In the infantry?

JS: In the infantry. 830 Division.

KS: Now, would you explain and identify these medals that are here? Which one is this, with the two stars on it?

JS: Well, that's European Theater with two battle stars.

KS: And what battles were you in?

JS: One at Normandy and the Battle of the Bulge.

KS: And this one here?

JS: That's a . . . that's a victory medal.

KS: Victory in Europe medal?

JS: Yeah. Victory in Europe medal.

KS: And this one right here?

JS: That's a good conduct medal.

KS: And, of course, Purple Heart.

JS: Purple Heart.

KS: Where were you wounded at?

JS: Wounded in France on June, I think the 16th.

KS: Were you discharged after that?

JS: No.

BS: I think it was the 14th.

JS: They put me in the labor supervision company. They wouldn't let me handle no gun.

My nerves were bad and everything, so they put me in the what's called the labor supervision company, guarding prisoners.

KS: And this one right here?

JS: That's the O-H-I-O, Ohio Division, A30 Infantry Division Emblem.

KS: And this one down here?

JS: This one here's the European Theater.

KS: And of course your infantry badge?

JS: Badge, infantry () badge.

KS: And what is this here?

JS: That's a shrapnel that was taken out of--from an 81 millimeter mortar, taken out of my chest.

KS: Was that--oh!

JS: Right about here. I still have a piece in me, down below I have another scar. That piece is still in me. See, when you got operated on the beach--I was operated on Normandy Beach.

You had no x-ray or nothing. All they do is put you on the table, operate. They get what they get and what they don't get, it has to stay. 'Cause they don't have time for x-ray machines or nothing on the beach. It's just like a MASH unit. You don't have no x-rays at all. So they got that piece out, and the nurse gave me that and I got awake, she gave me that piece, take me home a souvenir.

KS: Now, what is this I have, this plaque?

JS: That plaque you have is a Civilian Conservation Corps plaque. You can buy them with your name and it gives you the company number, and what you was: first cook, second cook, or whatever. Mess sergeant, you can get whatever you want.

KS: Very nice. Well, to continue along, John, after the military, what did you do?

JS: After the military, I came back here to Luray. Well, I married my wife on furlough. I come home on furlough, and married my wife in Virginia. Then after I got out of the Army, I came, took some more classes--

BS: I got stuff all over the house! [referring to items she has brought back to the interview area]

JS: Took some more classes on salesmanship. I wanted to get a job as salesman. I did go to work at American Visco but I don't know, it wasn't regular enough. It was always layoffs, layoffs, or . . . I took a veteran course on salesman and I got a job in a grocery store, a store called Chapman's Store. Mr. Edwin Markowitz run it, and between him and the government - the government provided so much money and he paid me so much a week, and I'd have to work at the store and then go to school at night. Mr. Hudson Price was the teacher at that time. He was a, I think, a major in the Army. But he was a teacher in this class of veterans that wanted to take these classes. So after that, got the job there, then I went to work at . . . after the grocery store I went to work at a laundry. And after I got done at the laundry, I went to work in a tannery, where the people who used to be on the mountain brought the bark down, to tan the hides with.

KS: Were they still bringing the bark down at that time?

JS: No, not at that time. That was when they used to live up there. But I worked at that tannery where they used to bring the bark. Then finally, I put in for a job for on the mountain, the National Park Service, and I got that, passed a test for civil service and got that job there at the Park. So I went to the Park in '73, 1973, for the Shenandoah National Park. Mr. Jacobson was superintendent, Rodney Lowe was engineer.

KS: And when did you retire from the Park?

JS: 198-- . . .

BS: '80 . . .

JS: 3 or 4 . . .

BS: '83, '83, around there somewhere.

JS: '83 or '84.

KS: Okay, this citation has a date of July 31st, 1985. Is that the date?

JS: That's it, '85.

KS: And I also see that you have a wooden replica of the arrowhead that says "1972 - 1985, Shenandoah National Park" and these signatures on there--who are they?

JS: They're all employees on the Park. On the Shenandoah National Park, they wrote their signature on that arrowhead.

KS: How would you say the CCC affected your life?

JS: CCC's was one of the best things that's ever happened. Not only to my life, to many men's life. There was a lot of men in other parts of the country, not only in Pennsylvania--all over. They couldn't get a job, didn't have no money. I try to go to the movies, it was 10 cents on Saturday, go to the movie. I didn't have a dime! And when I got a dime to go the movie, I stayed there 'til 11 o'clock at night, watch it two to three time, 'cause I didn't know the next time I was going to get back to see the movie. Used to see all these cowboy pictures and all. But CC's is the best thing that ever happened. President Roosevelt made that, in the Depression Days, he made other different things:

WPA and so on. But the CC's, he took the men off the street in the cities, and took them out of the countries, too, and gave them a place to work, make a few dollars, and made them learn some kind of worker skills and stuff as they went along, and gave them a chance to learn how to get away from home and be out. My experience in the Army was a lot of boys come in the Army, they were crying because it was the first time they left home. They were crying, but it didn't bother me, 'cause I'd done left home and been in CC camp five year. So when I went in the Army, I didn't have that problem. But the CC's is one of the best thing that ever happen and I wish they could have done it this time and century, this century here, and maybe save some of the younger fellows that's out of line now.

KS: Well, John, I want to thank you very much for answering these questions for us and the Shenandoah National Park certainly thanks you for your service to your country.

JS: You're welcome.

[END OF INTERVIEW]